

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1664

S E C R E T MOSCOW 18902

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV'S HEALTH AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE

REF: MOSCOW 18842

1. DURING SECRETARY SIMON'S VISIT, CHARGE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE BREZHNEV AT CLOSE QUARTERS FOR ABOUT TWO AND ONE HALF HOURS: FROM 17:30 TO SHORTLY AFTER 20:00 ON NOVEMBER 30, WHEN BREZHNEV RECEIVED SECRETARY SIMON AND THEN HOSTED KREMLIN DINNER FOR HIM AND US-USSR TRADE AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL. THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS MAY BE OF INTEREST TO THOSE WHO FOLLOW THE CONDITIONS OF HIS HEALTH.

2. IN GENERAL, BREZHNEV SEEMED TO BE IN RELATIVELY GOOD HEALTH. ALTHOUGH HE SHOWED SOME EVIDENCE OF FATIGUE JUST BEFORE HE LEFT THE DINNER, THIS WAS NOT EXTREMELY MARKED. HIS FAMOUS SLUR WAS NO MORE PRONOUNCED THAN IS USUAL, AND WAS SOMEWHAT LESS NOTICEABLE THAN IT WAS AT TIME TWO OR THREE YEARS AGO. HE SEEMED TO BE ATTENTIVE THROUGHOUT THE TWO AND ONE HALF HOURS, AND THOUGH AT THE DINNER HE ROSE AND OFFERED REPEATED TOASTS, HE DID NOT SEEM TO BE UNUSUALLY "PEPPED-UP" FOR THE OCCASION. HE WORE HIS HEARING AID THROUGHOUT THE SEEMED TO HAVE NO TROUBLE FOLLOWING NORMAL CONVERSATIONS.

3. THERE WAS ABUNDANT EVIDENCE THAT HE IS CAREFULLY

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FOLLOWING MEDICAL ADVICE TO CONSERVE HIS HEALTH. HIS

COMMENTS ON NOT HAVING SMOKED FOR 14 MONTHS, MADE WITH A COMBINATION OF PRIDE AND WISTFULNESS, WERE REPORTED IN REFTEL. HE ALSO REFERRED TO HAVING BEEN ORDERED NOT TO SMOKE "AFTER THAT PROCEDURE" AS IF THE FACT THAT HE HAD UNDERGONE MEDICAL TREATMENT LAST YEAR WAS GENERAL KNOWLEDGE. HE DRANK MODESTLY AT THE DINNER: HE DRANK TOASTS FROM A SMALLER GLASS THAN THAT USED BY OTHERS (THE ONE NORMALLY USED FOR BRANDY RATHER THAN THE VODKA GLASS), AND CONSUMED ONLY THE FIRST GLASS BOTTOMS UP; HE SIPPED SLIGHTLY AFTER SUBSEQUENT TOASTS. (SINCE HE WAS SERVED OUT OF THE SAME BOTTLE AS OTHERS, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT HIS GLASS DID HAVE VODKA RATHER THAN WATER IN IT, BUT IF SO HIS TOTAL CONSUMPTION WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE THAN ONE OUNCE.) HE ATE MODERATELY, AND DID NOT SEEM TO TAKE THE MAIN COURSE, SINCE HE HAD AN EMPTY PLATE BEFORE HIM WHILE THOSE AROUND HIM WERE ON THE MAIN COURSE.

4. ALTHOUGH HE STOOD THROUGHOUT THE DELIVERY AND TRANSLATION OF HIS SPEECH, HE DID NOT DELIVER THE ENTIRE SPEECH IN RUSSIAN. HE WENT THROUGH THE FIRST TWO OR THREE PAGES (ABOUT 5" X 8", DOUBLE SPACED), LET SUKHODREV TRANSLATE THE ENTIRE MIDDLE PORTION OF THE SPEECH WITHOUT ITS HAVING BEEN DELIVERED IN RUSSIAN, THEN READ THE LAST TWO PAGES. WHEN SOME OF THE SOVIET OFFICIALS NEAR HIM NOTICED THAT THE TRANSLATION WAS COVERING AN UNDELIVERED PORTION OF THE SPEECH, BREZHNEV BENT OVER TO WHISPER THAT HE HAD A PRE-ARRANGEMENT WITH SUKHODREV TO SAVE TIME.

5. FROM ABOUT 19:30 HIS FACE BEGAN TO SHOW SOME SIGNS OF FATIGUE AND THE WHITES OF HIS EYES BECAME SLIGHTLY PINK (BUT NOT BLOOD-SHOT). HIS CONVERSATION SLOWED SOMEWHAT AND THERE WERE MORE PERIODS OF SILENCE THAN BEFORE. PROMPTLY AT 20:00, HE ROSE, OFFERED A FINAL TOAST, WISHED EVERYONE GOOD NIGHT, THEN LEFT THE HALL, SHAKING HANDS WITH 15 OR 20 PEOPLE AND CHATTING WITH THEM BRIEFLY ON THE WAY OUT. PATOLICHEV CONTINUED AS ACTING HOST FOR ANOTHER 20 MINUTES OR SO UNTIL THE DINNER ENDED.

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